Turtle River
Provincial Waterway Park

Concept Plan

Ontario
Ministry of
Natural
Resources
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I. Introduction

Turtle River Provincial Waterway Park represents a major contribution to the Ontario Provincial Parks system. It is comprised of approximately 160 km. of lakes and rivers and contains a variety of interrelated natural and cultural features, many of which are considered of regional, even provincial significance.

The Turtle River - White Otter Castle Lake area has long been recognized as a significant natural resource with unique biophysical, recreational, and cultural/historical attributes. The Turtle River constitutes a high quality recreational area and canoe route, situated within the long and scenic Turtle River valley. The southern reaches of the river exhibit large marshes and areas of wild rice, which provide abundant habitat for moose and waterfowl.

II. Policy Content

1. Provincial Parks Policy

The Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies ("The Blue Book"), approved by the Ontario Government in 1978, establishes a framework for a parks system in Ontario. There are currently 261 Provincial Parks in Ontario. This comprehensive system represents the natural, cultural, and recreational features of the province in six classes of Provincial Parks.

The six park classifications include Wilderness, Nature Reserve, Historical, Natural Environment, Waterway and Recreation Parks. The concept of park classification recognizes that a well-balanced park system provides a wide variety of experiences in a number of differing landscapes and ensures the maintenance of diversity within the parks system, from strictly protected natural areas to highly developed recreation facilities. Consequently, no individual park can be all things to all people.

In May 1988, the Ontario Government announced its new parks policy. In all classes of park in the provincial system, the parks policy prohibits: mining activity, commercial hydroelectric development, and logging (except in Algonquin and Lake Superior Parks, where logging is permitted to continue). In addition, the policy will eliminate in all parks through a transition period, commercial trapping, commercial wild rice harvesting and most commercial fishing.

Status Indians enjoying treaty rights to carry on traditional natural resource harvesting activities shall be

permitted to carry on those activities in accordance with the terms of their treaty within provincial parks situated within their treaty areas. According such Status Indians will be permitted to carry on those activities in certain circumstances. The details of those circumstances will be the subject of further discussion and review.

2. Objectives of the Provincial Parks System

The Provincial Parks Policy also describes the four objectives of the Provincial Parks system:

1.	Protection Objective	To protect provincially significant elements of the natural and cultural landscape of Ontario.
2.	Recreation Objective	To provide Provincial Park outdoor recreation opportunities ranging from high-intensity day use to low-intensity wilderness experience.
3.	Heritage Appreciation Objective	To provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the outdoor natural and cultural heritage of Ontario.
4.	Tourism Appreciation Objective	To provide Ontario's residents and out-of province visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the Provinces.

3. Goal Statement For Turtle River Park

The goal of Turtle River Provincial Waterway Park is to provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities and to protect significant natural and cultural features. In this way Turtle River contributes to the achievement of all the above objectives of the Provincial Parks system

4. Park Classification

Turtle River Provincial Park is classified as a Waterway Park. The Provincial Parks Policy defines Waterway Parks as those areas which:

> "incorporate outstanding recreational water routes with representative natural features and historic resources to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences".

5. Turtle River Park Planning Guidelines

In June 1983, following considerable study and public consultation, the Ministry of Natural Resources produced District Land Use Guidelines (D.L.U.G.) for the Province to direct the future use of Crown Land. These guidelines also included recommendations for the establishment of new parks. The Turtle River Waterway Park, with an area of approximately 40,055 hectares, was identified as one of 25 new waterway parks recommended for provincial park status. In the Backgrounder to the Land Use Guidelines (released in June, 1983), direction was given regarding permitted uses within Turtle River. Those permitted uses included hunting, trapping, commercial fishing, commercial tourism and mineral exploration.

During August of 1986, the Ministry of Natural Resources prepared an Interim Management Statement for Turtle River Provincial Park, to provide further direction for the park until a comprehensive Park Management Plan could be prepared. The revised Provincial Parks Policy (1988) further defined these uses. The location, nature and extent of the permitted uses in the park will be determined in the Park Management Plan. The Plan will also define the role and significance of the Turtle River Waterway within the Provincial Park System. It will identify zoning within the park and provide a statement of park policy which will direct the protection, use, development and management of the park's resources.

Turtle River Provincial Waterway Park was placed in regulation on May 8, 1989, and it is expected that this park management planning process will be completed by summer 1990.

III. A CONCEPT PLAN FOR TURTLE RIVER WATERWAY PARK

Turtle River Park must be planned as a Waterway Park. Uses and activities are proposed that contribute to the achievement of waterway park objectives established in the Blue Book, and the 1988 Provincial Parks Policy. Other uses will be permitted to the extent that they do not jeopardize the integrity of the values for which the park was created.

The traditional approach is to present a number of optional plans for public review and comment. For Turtle River Park, this approach has been somewhat modified. Within the framework of the Provincial Parks Policy, a Concept Plan is introduced with suggested zoning and management policies pertinant to Turtle River Waterway Park. Several variations and options are presented within the Concept, which are further addressed by questions in the Questionaire. Public consultation and input constitutes an intregal part of the planning process, and is very important in the formulation of the Preliminary Park Plan.

This section introduces the Concept Plan, which is divided into three sections:

i) Zoning - This section introduces a suggested zoning system for Turtle River Park. It includes a brief description for each zone and some zone variations, which relates to the accompanying map and questionnaire.

ii) Park Management Policies - This section represents the core of the concept plan. Management objectives and detailed policies are presented for such diverse elements as resource protection, access and travel, specific resource management and park operations.

iii) Potential Boundary Revisions - This section includes a discussion of seven potential park boundary revisions, which are shown on map #1. Questions relating to these revisions appear in the questionnaire.

This Concept Plan has been formulated from an examination of the best available resource information and public input available to date. It is intended as a starting point for discussion and will be modified into a Preliminary Management Plan as a result of further public input. The various components of the Concept Plan are reviewed in the questionnaire. Please respond as completely as possible; your comments are encouraged and are vital to the subsequent planning for the park.

1. ZONING

The concept of zoning recognizes that every park includes a combination of resources, features and potential experiences. These attributes relate to the principal purpose of the park's establishment and classification.

Lands and waters within the Turtle River Provincial Waterway Park will be zoned so that they may be allocated to their most appropriate use. Land and water activities and types of development acceptable within the park are specified by zone classification.

There are five different zones that have been tentatively allocated in Turtle River Waterway Park, including Natural Environment, Historical/Cultural, Access, Development and Nature Reserve. The sixth zone is that of wilderness, and are those areas delineated to protect substantial tracts of wilderness landscape. Given the limited land area and the extent of land uses adjacent to the park boundary, it has been determined that this zone classification is not appropriate to the geographical configuration of Turtle River Waterway Park.

a) Natural Environment Zones

Natural Environment Zones designate those aesthetic sections of the Waterway in which there is minimum development required to support low to moderate intensity recreational use. By far, the greatest land and water area of the park will be allocated to Natural Environment Zoning.

The Turtle River and its associated lakes represent outstanding canoeing opportunities throughout its length, with motor boating opportunities also present in numerous locations. The Concept suggests that these scenic recreational areas, for the most part, will be incorporated in one of the four Natural Environment Zones proposed for Turtle River Park:

i) NE-1 McNamara Lake to White Otter Lake

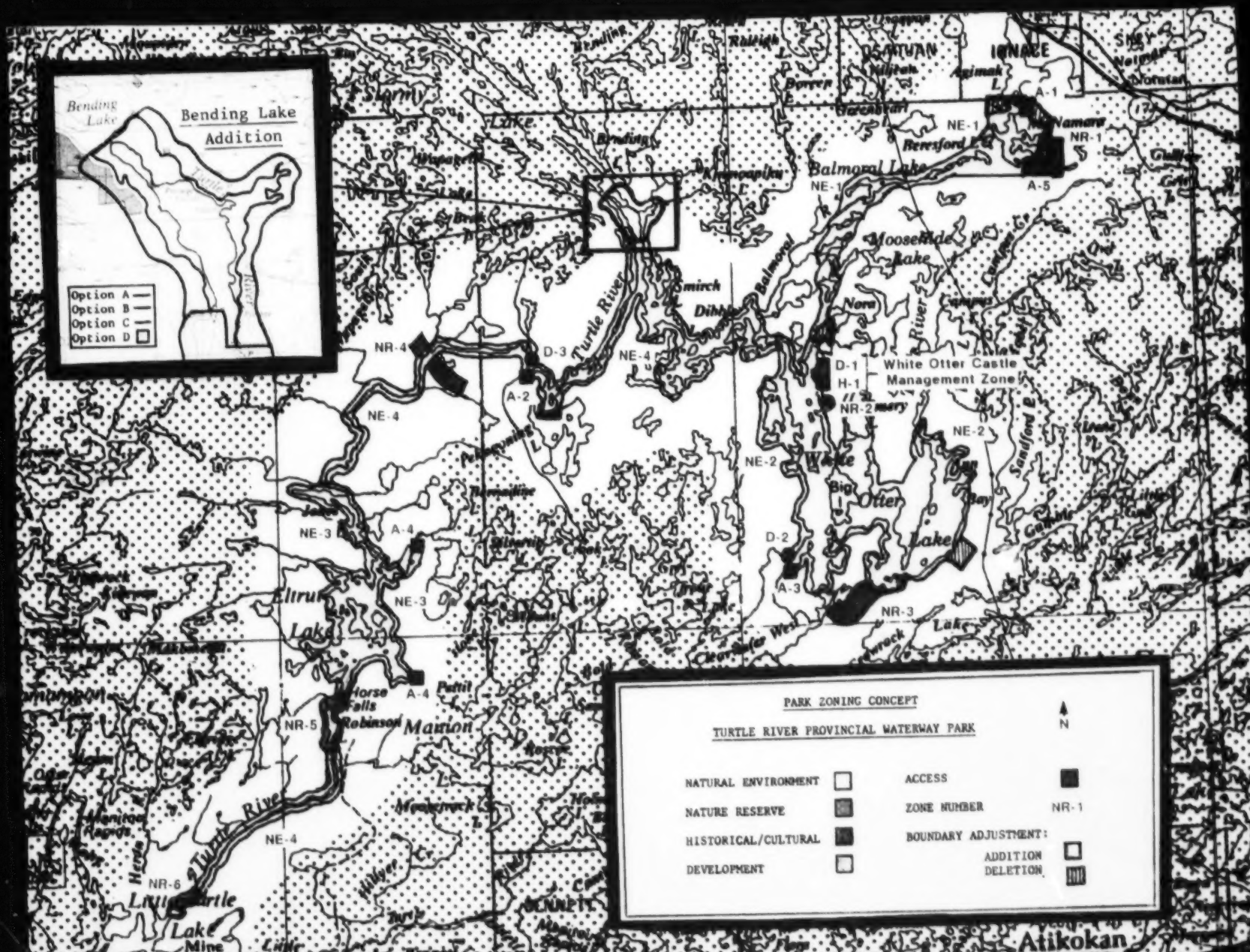
This river portion of the Waterway Park should be managed primarily for its canoeing opportunities, with little additional development. There is the possiblity that a motor ban or motor size restriction could be implemented. However, due to the 16 portages in this stretch, it may be that motor restrictions may be self-regulating and need not be implemented. Similarly, perhaps hunting should be restricted here in keeping with the more secluded nature of this portion of the park.

ii) NE-2 White Otter Lake

The natural and cultural features, along with the existing uses of White Otter Lake, would appear to be unique enough to warrant management distinct from the rest of the park. Thus, it is suggested that White Otter Lake constitute its own zone, and will be managed for boat-in camping on individual sites, limited development and the protection of the White Otter Castle site. Management direction will also ensure that opportunities for public visitation to the Castle site are maintained. Operational requirements for the park will likely be most intensive in the White Otter Lake Zone.

iii) NE-3 Eltrut and Jones Lake

Eltrut and Jones Lake are connected by a low-lying stretch of the Turtle River, consisting of wetland and wild rice. There is no impediment to travel between the two lakes and access to both waterbodies is easily attained by motorboat. Areas of wild rice in the vicinity of these lakes are licenced to and harvested by the Wabigoon Indian Band. Eltrut and Jones lakes are intensively fished by day-use recreationists which gain access from one of two locations on the east shore of Eltrut Lake. In addition, there are four outpost camps on Jones Lake which is the only sector of the park with a facility-based commercial tourism component.


Bending Lake
Bending Lake Addition
Option A
Option B
Option C
Option D
PARK ZONING CONCEPT
TURTLE RIVER PROVINCIAL WATERWAY PARK
N
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
NATURE RESERVE
HISTORICAL/CULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT
ACCESS
ZONE NUMBER
NR-1
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT:
ADDITION
DELETION
White Otter Castle
Management Zone
Turtle River
Balmoral Lake
Mooseside Lake
Big White Otter Lake
Eltrut Lake
Marion
Horse Falls
Robinson
Atikokan

Thus, this portion of the park may be managed for its significant boating and angling pressure both from day-use and fly-in outpost recreationists. The decision as to the status of commercial tourism in the park will be addressed in this planning process (eg. whether to allow to continue, to phase out or to expand).

iv) NE-4 Turtle River Proper

The Waterway portion of the park that geographically constitutes the Turtle River is designated as the fourth zone. Dibble and Smirch Lakes are included in this zone. These lakes have road access and are utilized extensively by day-use fisherman. This zone will be managed for canoeing, motorboating, and fishing opportunities as well as camping on individual sites. Access to various sectors of the river will also be examined, particularly in terms of numbers of access locations and the necessity of access in contributing to park objectives.

Activities which may be Permitted within Natural Environment Zones:

It is suggested that the following activities be permitted in Natural Environment Zones(*):

- canoeing
- motor boating
- snowmobiling
- aircraft landings (controlled by permit)
- cross-country skiing
- sportfishing
- hunting
- individual site camping
- commercial baitfishing
- commercial tourism development (conducive to park values)
- facilitates as required for park management
- trails
- trapping and wild rice harvesting (phased out in 21 years, exept for status Indian use)

(*) See suggested variations for Zone NE-1 on Page 6

b) Nature Reserve Zones

Nature Reserve Zones designate those areas which constitute significant earth and life science features in the park which require management distinct from that in adjacent areas. Use of these zones will be limited to those activities relating to education and scientific research purposes.

Due to their specific protection requirements, Nature Reserves have special restrictions. These include: no hunting, camping or mechanized travel (motors, all-terrain vehicles (ATV's), snowmobiles, aircraft landings). The water surface will be zoned "Natural Environment" throughout the park, so as not to impede travel or other activities along the waterway.

There are six Nature Reserves being suggested for designation in Turtle River Park. Their biophysical significance and contribution to the protection objective for the park are listed below:

i) McNamara Lake Ice Contact Moraine:

This feature exhibits two good examples of ice-contact deltas deposited in an ice margin lake between the Eagle-Finlayson Moraine to the south and the Hartman Moraine to the North.

ii) White Otter Castle Ice Contact Delta:

This is an excellent example of a "perched" or "hanging" delta formed in an ice margin lake, when the ice front retreated a few kilometers north of the Eagle-Finlayson Moraine. There are also a number of vegetative peatland and associated species.

iii) Rollingstone Lake Ice Contact Landforms:

The Rollingstone Lake area is located between Clearwater West Lake and the south end of White Otter Lake. It is significant due to the excellent and varied glacio-fluvial ice contact features found here. This complex area exhibits such land forms as kame knolls, extensive esker systems, boulder ridges and ice contact deltas and kettle terrain. This is likely the best example of such a complex south of Highway 17 between Thunder Bay and Manitoba. The area is considered of regional, perhaps provincial significance.

(Because most of this feature lies outside the park boundary, the Concept suggests that the feature be included in the park in its entirety. Refer to page 18 - Potential Boundary Revisions-Additions).

iv) Eagle-Finlayson Moraine

This site exhibits excellent representation of a relatively undisturbed section of the Eagle-Finlayson moraine, a single ridge moraine, deposited at times of high water levels of glacial Lake Agassiz, about 11,000 years before present. The intolerant upland forest on the southwest ridge has eductional and interpretive value, as it vividly portrays the relationship between vegetation and physiographic site characteristics.

v) Robinson Lake Wetlands

This wetland provides excellent representation of deep marshes, including bulrush, arrowhead and wild rice. The lakes shoreline and stream inlets support green ash-black ash hardwood swamps, alder willow and thicket swamps.

Scenic Horse Falls, the highest vertical drop on the Turtle River, is protected in this zone.

vi) Little Turtle Lake - Turtle River Wetlands:

This is an extensive area of wetlands consisting of march, swamp and bog formation dominance species. The site is significant because of the large number of vegetative species found here at the northern extent of their range (eg. green ash, red oak, nannyberry, silver maple, burr oak, carion flower, white elm and hawthorn). This alluvial swamp community, with its associated banks and levees, channel banks, backwater sloughs, incised meanders and other features is considered to be regionally, possibly provincially significant.

Permitted uses will be limited to those activities permitted to occur in Nature Reserve Zones by Provincial Parks Policy. Hunting and mechanized travel are not permitted in these zones. Development will be limited to trails, necessary signs, minimal interpretive facilities and temporary facilities for research and management.

The Concept suggests:

that because of their earth and life science representational significance, that the above features be designated as Nature Reserve Zones in Turtle River Park.

c) Access Zones

Access Zones serve as staging areas where minimum support facilities enable entry to and use of the park environment. There are currently at least nine locations where access is gained to the Turtle River Waterway Park. In addition, there may be other locations where logging roads encroach close enough to the park boundary to enable access.

The existing access points (from north to south) are as follows:

i) Moosehide Road Crossing north of Patricia Lake
ii) Clearwater West - White Otter Lake portage
iii) Ann Bay landing
iv) Dibble Lake landing
v) Bending Lake road bridge
vi) Eltrut Lake (Northeast arm)
vii) Eltrut Lake (Southeast arm)
viii) Robinson Lake (South end at rapids)
ix) 6 km. south of Robinson Lake where a branch of the Glenorchy Road crosses the Turtle River.

There is also water access at each terminus of the park, at McNamara Lake in the north and Little Turtle Lake in the south. It must be determined which access points should be maintained in order to adequately facilitate entry to the different sectors of the park. However, it is unlikely that all nine access locations are required in order to fulfil this requirement.

One major factor in determining access locations is the continued viability of maintenance on the access roads which lead to the park boundary. Often there are several kilometres of gravel road, which once abandoned by the timber companies will continue to deteriorate. Thus, the long-term use of these roads must be considered in terms of the costs required for their maintenance.

The following considerations pertinent to these access points will be examined:

i) Moosehide Road Crossing: This access location is via the "34 South Road" (Doreen Lake Road) from Highway 17, where the Moosehide Lake Road crosses the Turtle River Park. This access road is used to transport timber from the area east of McNamara Lake. A washed-out bridge over the Balmoral River (to the west of the Park) was replaced in September, 1989, once again providing access to the park. This location and the Dibble Lake landing are the two most common routes used to visit White Otter Castle from the north. It remains highly unlikely that there would be funding commitments for long-term maintenance of these timber access roads, solely for park use.

ii) Clearwater West - White Otter Lake Portage (water access): This portage is extensivey used, both privately and by commercial tourist outfitters. Apart from Ann Bay, it is the only access from the south side of White Otter Lake. Access is gained to the Clearwater West public landing, a short drive off the Bending Lake Highway. Boating across Clearwater West to this portage landing can sometimes be hazardous due to the open nature of the lake.

iii) Dibble Lake Landing: This access location and the Moosehide Road crossing provide access from the north to the park and White Otter Castle. As such, it must be determined if both are necessary and/or appropriate. Prospects for long-term maintenance of the 42 km. stretch of timber access road remains uncertain.

iv) Bending Lake Road (Highway 622) Crossing: Excellent access is provided to the park at the location where the hard-surfaced Bending Lake Road crosses the Turtle River. Completed in September, 1989, the maintenance of this Ministry of Transportation highway will likely be assured for many years.

vi, vii) Eltrut Lake (2 locations: N/E & S/E arms)
viii, ix) South of Robinson Lake (2 locations):
These four access locations are all in relatively close proximity in the southern reaches of the waterway, and are accessed by branches of various timber access roads. It must be determined which of these four access locations warrants being retained since only one or two are likely necessary to fulfill access requirements to this portion of the Park. It has been indicated that the Eltrut (Glenorchy) Road is the most likely to have long-term maintenance.

The Concept suggests:

that the recommended Access Zones for Turtle River Park, based on geographic location and anticipated commitment to long-term road maintenance, be as follows: (Refer to map)

i) McNamara Lake (water access) (Zone A-1)

This location may serve as one of the primary access zones for low intensity recreational travel, primarily canoeing. There will likely be some form of park entry facility, perhaps with privitized fee collection and/or outfitting services.

ii) Bending Lake Highway Crossing (Zone A-2)

Likely a major access location for motorboat recreationists, this site may be deemed appropriate for such developments as a launch ramp facility, small parking lot, park entry, and fee collection station. Those facilities may be linked to the adjacent development zone, where campground or other tourism services may be provided.

iii) Clearwater West Portage (water access) (Zone A-3)

This location is a very popular entry point to White Otter Lake, and is frequently used by visitors to White Otter Castle. There may also be some form of park entry and fee collection station, while the adjacent development zone may provide further tourism services.

iv) Eltrut Lake (Northeast arm or Southeast arm) (Zone A-4)

Heaviiy used by day-use recreationists who fish on Eltrut and Jones Lake, these access locations may provide limited access facilities, including fee station, boat launch ramp and a parking area.

v) McNamara Lake Winter Access Zone (Zone A-5)

This additional Access Zone is suggested only for winter use by snowmobiles. This zone is southwest of McNamara Lake and is bordered on both sides by the McNamara Lake Ice Contact Moraine Nature Reserve. This Access Zone follows an existing trail, therefore, impacts would likely be minimal.

d) Development Zones:

Development Zones provide access for park visitors to the water route, and provide facilities and services for a wide range of day-use, camping or tourism development activities, where appropriate. In order to offer the public a greater variety of tourism services in provincial parks, some development options will be considered, provided they are deemed compatable with park values.

The Concept suggests:

that there be four development zones designated within Turtle River Park. These include the following:

i) Clearwater West Portage

There are various potential development strategies that could be examined for implementation of this popular access point. These could include: campground development, some form of roofed accommodation, a mechanical portage (to allow larger boats access to White Otter Lake), and perhaps even a shuttle boat service to White Otter Castle. Private sector involvement may be considered for these developments.

ii) Bending Lake Road (Highway 622)

This development zone is proposed for the northwestern sector at the Turtle River/Bending Lake Highway Crossing. (The adjacent Access Zone is on the southwest corner of the bridge). This location may also be an appropriate site as a highway rest stop and park entry station, including the possibility of exhibiting interpretive displays for the park. Demand for camping facilities here could be met either within a development zone in the park or by the private sector campground outside and adjacent to the park boundary. Along with campground development, perhaps some form of roofed accommodations could be deemed appropriate. Private sector involvement in such developments would likely be considered here.

iii) White Otter Castle Development Zone (included within the White Otter Castle Management Zone)

The adjacent land to the north of White Otter Castle is recommended for a Development Zone. This area presently includes a boat-in campground and surrounding trails. The designation of the area as a development zone allows for such improvements as upgrading the campground, self-guiding trails, a dock facility, and an orientation site (including landing area and interpretive displays). The Friends of White Otter Castle commissioned a Feasibility Study which was completed in April 1989. They are currently negotiating a Management Aggreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources to manage the White Otter Castle site.

iv) Eltrut Lake

Whichever location for an Access Zone is selected from the two candidates (see Access Zones, page 12 part iv) will likely have an adjacent Development zone.

Permitted uses include roads, visitor control structures, day use facilities, car and boat campgrounds, basic commercial service facilities (eg. possibly a marina and outfitting facilities for Waterway users.) In addition, there may be provision for orientation, interpretive, educational, research and management facilities. Some form of roofed accomodation may also be considered.

e) Historical/Cultural Zone

Historical/Cultural zones include significant archaeological and historical resources of the park which require management distinct from that in adjacent zones. The priority for historical zones will be protection and research. Subject to the management prescriptions that will be prepared for each zone in the park operating plan, minimal interpretive, research and management facilities may be provided.

There are 65 historical and cultural sites in Turtle River Waterway Park. These include 24 pictograph sites (16 on White Otter Lake) and 39 prehistoric occupation sites (where artifacts such as pottery shards, stone flakes, etc. were found). However, because these numerous sites do not warrant management distinct from that of adjacent Natural Environment Zones, they will continue to be protected within Natural Environment Zones. Thus, the only Cultural/Historical zone designated in the park will be that of White Otter Castle site.

f) White Otter Castle Management Zone

White Otter Castle is an intriguing historic entity, which has drawn visitors to the site for decades, to marvel at the construction of this massive structure on the remote shores of White Otter Lake. The castle represents an unusual, even epic, accomplishment and has become one of the best known landmarks in Northwestern Ontario. It is estimated that 3,000 people visit the castle annually.

Because of the uniqueness of the White Otter Castle site, it is suggested that this location should be addressed in a separate management zone. The site currently includes a boat-in campground, trails, remnants of an old lands and forest cabin and logging camp and of course, the legendary castle itself.

While the Castle site is contained within the boundaries of Turtle River Waterway park, it is proposed that the administration of the site be shared through a Management Agreement between the Ministry of Natural Resources and citizens group known as the "Friends of White Otter Castle Inc". This Agreement will address custodial stewardship of the castle site by this group for purposes of protection and restoration.

The "Friends" are comprised of a group of concerned citizens in the region and were the catalyst behind the Feasibility Study (completed April 1989) prepared by the consulting firm of Hilderman, Witty, Crosby, Hanna & Associates. This study explored the options for the preservation and restoration of the Castle. The preferred option recommends that the Castle be dismantled, logs tested for soundness, and reassembled to it's 1919 exterior finish, but without doors and windows which it exhibits in its current condition. The total capital costs could reach $1.5 million. The study also outlines plans for on site improvements such as trails, a dock and interpretive displays.

The Management Agreement currently being negotiated between the Friends of White Otter Castle and the Ministry of Natural Resources further contributes to the site being a unique management area. Under the terms of the proposed Agreement, the Friends of White Otter Castle would be responsible for the protection, restoration, operation and maintenance of the castle. The Castle site will require the formulation of special management strategies to ensure that operational activities are in keeping with the parks natural and cultural values.

i) Historical/Cultural

The White Otter Castle is the focus of this zone. It also includes what is thought to be Jimmy McQuat's grave, and the remains of some outbuildings. Interpretive displays and trails may be developed by the "Friends of White Otter Castle" to better communicate the castle theme.

Not far from the castle, is the site of an old Ontario Lands and Forests cabin, where the steps and foundation are still visible. About 1 km. north of the castle, is the remains of the Jim Mathieu lumber mill site (established around 1936) which is alleged to have served a prisoner-of-war camp for seventy-five German seamen between 1943 and 1946. These features serve to enhance the historical interest of the castle site.

ii) Development

This development zone adjacent to the Castle constitutes a significant portion of the White Otter Castle Management Zone and has been previously discussed under Development Zone, Part iii (page 14).

3. Potential Boundary Adjustments

For various reasons, there are eight park boundary adjustments which are being proposed (five additions, three deletions). (Refer to map for locations and note that all area figures given are very approximate.) These suggested adjustments are as follows:

a) ADDITIONS

i) McNamara Lake Ice Contact Moraine (200 ha.)

This earth science feature of McNamara Lake is considered regionally significant. However, part of this ice contact moraine is situated outside the park boundary. It is, therefore suggested that this portion be included within the park boundary.

Impact of this addition: While this would remove 200 hectares of productive forest from the park, the proposed deletion to the north would contribute back 600 ha. of productive forest. A trapline cabin is located in this vicinity. Other impacts are minimal.

ii) White Otter Castle Ice Contact Moraine (60 ha.)

This high quality representative sample of an Ice Contact Moraine, is being proposed as a Nature Reserve, in place of the Ann Bay Moraine.

Impact of this addition: This area is a swampy lowland area containing little productive forest. Impacts would likely be minimal.

iii) Rollingstone Lake Ice Contact Land Forms (440 ha.)

The significance of this complex glacial formation is considerable (see discussion re Nature Reserve Zones (part iii) on page 8). Although the Ice Contact Moraine features southwest of Ann Bay are considered regionally (perhaps provincially) significant, most of it lies outside the park boundary. It is, therefore, recommended that this feature be included in the park.

Impact of this addition: Contains approximately 400 ha. of productive forest. However, this is likely only marginally productive due to terrain constraints and old age forest classes.

iv) Bending Lake/Turtle River Waterway

The inclusion of this 13 km. stretch of the Turtle River currently lying outside the park is suggested to ensure the geographic integrity of the Turtle River Waterway system. (Refer to inset on map) It is recognized that mining interest in this vicinity may prove to be a major concern, and to a lesser extent, tourism and timber values. Since this portion is not currently included within the park boundary, there are four alternatives to delineating this inclusion:

Option A: Peninsula only (300 ha.)

Impact of this addition:

- contains approx. 100 ha. productive forest land
- contains a patented (private) summer cottage
- is situated in "green stone belt" known to be of high mineral potential

Option B: Peninsula and water area up to high water mark on adjacent shore (650 ha.)

Impact of this addition: would be primarily the same as cited: for a) peninsula only.

Option C: Peninsula, water area and 200 metres of adjacent shores (1000 ha.)

Impact of this addition would be the most significant since this area contains the following:

- 5 leased mining claims
- approx. 250 ha. productive forest land
- 1 small commercial airbase
- 1 small wilderness lodge (currently non-operating)
- 1 trapper cabin
- 1 private summer cottage (patented land)
- is situated in "green stone" belt known to be of high mineral potential

Option D: Present park boundary unchanged

Impact of this addition: Since no adjustments would be made to park boundary in this option, there would be no further impacts.

v) Turtle River Terminus (130 ha.)

It is recommended that the park boundary at the mouth of the Turtle River be extended into Little Turtle Lake for approximately one kilometer. This will ensure geographic integrity of the waterway, and will protect the wetland on the river southeast shore, lying just outside the park boundary.

Impact: Since this area contains mostly water and lowland swamp, there is likely minimal impact.

b) DELETIONS

i) Ann Bay Ice Contact Moraine (225 ha.)

Because the ice contact moraine feature is already represented by the White Otter Castle Ice Contact Moraine, the Concept suggests the Ann Bay Moraine be deleted from the park boundary.

Impact: Contributes approx. 225 ha. back into productive forest.

ii) McNamara Lake - North sector (600 ha.)

Because the land area north of McNamara Lake contributes little to park values, the Concept suggests that this area be deleted. (Conversely, it is suggested that the McNamara Ice Contact Moraine addition to the south be included within the park).

Impact of this deletion: Contributes approx. 600 ha. forest land back into productive forest. Little further impact.

iii) Nora Lake (40 ha.) Pekagoning Lake (25 ha.) water area

Where the Turtle River enters these two lakes respectively, the Concept suggests that, in each case, the park boundary follow the edge of the line of islands at the river mouth (rather than across the water area as does the present boundary). These small deletions of park area are for purposes of better geographic delineation of the park boundary.

Impact of this deletion: Since this area is almost all water, there would be minimal impact.

4. Park Management Policies

The Waterway Park classification is associated with certain activities which are appropriate to this type of landscape. However, the park policy states that for Waterway Parks, many issues regarding permitted uses must be resolved on an individual park-by-park basis. Furthermore, while various activities may be permitted in some zones, they may be prohibited in other areas in order to best protect park values. Such issues include hunting, boat caches, commercial bait fishing and mechanized travel (motor boats, ATV's, snowmobiles). This park management planning process will determine the appropriateness of these activities within Turtle River Waterway Park.

a) Permitted Uses

Permitted uses will vary in Historic, Development, Access and Nature Reserve Zones, as specified by Ontario Provincial Parks Policy. The Policy regarding the following activities must be determined in this planning exercise:

i) Hunting

In accordance with the 1988 Provincial Parks Policy, the issue of whether or not to allow hunting will be determined on a case-by case basis in waterway parks during the park management planning process. It may be that the public wishes to have hunting prohibited here, or there may be much support for allowing hunting to continue as in the past.

The Concept suggests:

that hunting be allowed to continue in this park with the exception of Nature Reserve, Access and Development zones. As previously discussed (pg. 6), Zone NE-1 may be subject to hunting restrictions.

ii) Boat Caches

The issue of whether or not to permit boat caches within Turtle River Park must be determined during this planning exercise. There are three categories of boat caches: private recreational, commercial (tourist operator or outfitter) and resource user (trapper, bait fishermen, wild rice harvester, etc.). Existing fisheries data for waterbodies within the park is limited. As new fisheries data becomes available, the level of permitted resource uses may be influenced.

The Concept suggests:

the following policies regarding boat caches in Turtle River Park:

Private: In keeping with the intent of Parks Policy, private boat caches will be phased out. Proposed commercial services in some Development Zones may allow for private boat storage.

Commercial: In order to maintain the tourism objective for the park, it is suggested that existing commercial boat caches will be permitted to continue, with the exception of Nature Reserve and Access Zones. However, continued use of these commercial boat caches will be dependant on resource capacity. Provision for commercial boat concessions may be permitted in development zones at some time in the future. As new data becomes available, the commercial boat cache policy for the park may be revised.

Resource User: Where resource harvesting is a permitted use, it is suggested that resource user boat caches be permitted to continue, but will be subject to Ontario Provincial Parks Policy. (e.g. according to Park Policy, trapping has a 21 year phase-out).

iii) Mechanized Travel

The issue of mechanized travel (motorboats, snowmobiles, ATV's and aircraft) must be addressed in this park plan. It may be deemed advantageous to restrict motorboat travel in sections of waterway that appear more conducive to canoe travel and more remote surroundings. This may be appropriate for the McNamara - White Otter Lake section (Natural Environment Zone NE-1).

This planning exercise must also address whether to allow snowmobile travel in all sectors of the park. It is recognized that White Otter Castle is a very popular snowmobile destination, and that a major trail system already connects Atikokan and Ignace through the park.

The Concept suggests:

That, in general, mechanized travel (including snowmobiles, motorboats and aircraft) be permitted to continue. However, restrictions will apply in Nature Reserves, as specified in Provincial Parks Policy. In addition, it is suggested that no all-terrain vehicles be permitted in Turtle River Waterway Park, except in Access and Development zones. As in all Provincial Parks, aircraft landings will require prior authorization and landing permits will be required once the park becomes operational.

iv) Commercial Tourism

There are four outpost camps existing within the park boundary, all of which are in the vicinity of Jones Lake. The decision as to whether this activity is in keeping with park values and objectives must be determined in this park management planning exercise. The options are as follows:

1) allow them to remain
2) allow expansion
3) phase out

v) Tourism Services

There are also Tourism Services which may be considered within Turtle River Park:

1) campground
2) roofed accommodation
3) mechanical portage
4) privatized entry point
5) outfitting services

The Concept suggests:

that existing levels of commercial tourism which are based on sportfishing and hunting in the park be permitted to continue. The future level of the activity will be determined by resource capability data, as it becomes available. It is also suggested that other tourism services which are not dependant on fish and wildlife resources may be considered.

vi) Commercial Bait Fishing

Commercial bait fish licenses are issued by basemap throughout the Turtle River Waterway Park area. The Provincial Parks Policy states that commercial bait fishing will not be permitted in Provincial parks, except in waterway parks. In these parks, the status of bait fishing will be determined in the park management planning process. If through this planning process, a phase-out is deemed necessary, it would occur only in the waterbodies wholly contained within the park. However, since most waterbodies in the park are of little value for commercial baitfish, this issue is considered a minor one.

The Concept suggests:

that commercial bait fishing be permitted to continue.

b) Access Policy

Due to concerns about funding for long-term access road maintenance, there are only four suggested Access zones which provide access to the park. The remaining access locations may be permitted to remain, until no longer sustainable, or a few may be actively removed in order to protect park values (see Access zones - page 12).

There is also concern that unwarranted access may be gained to the park by means of access roads adjacent to the park boundary. It is MNR's intent to ensure that parks values and objectives are fulfilled. Therefore, it is suggested that any roads constructed adjacent to the park boundary could include conditions, such as site location, standards and removal (if necessary).

The Concept suggests:

that a 180 metre "limited road zone" be implemented adjacent to the boundary of Turtle River Park. The potential impact of road locations adjacent to the park would be addressed in timber management plans and work permits.

c) Fire Management Policy for Turtle River Park:

Although fire is not a land use itself, it can have significant impact on park values and landscape. It has been determined that every forest fire in Turtle River Park will receive a response, and each response will be governed by the predicted behavior of the fire and the potential impact of the fire on person, property, and values.

The objectives of the Fire Strategy will be to:

i) to prevent personal injury, loss of life, and social disruption resulting from a forest fire
ii) to minimize the negative impact of fire on public and private property and the natural resources with the Park
iii) to possibly utilize the natural benefits of fire in achieving the Ministry objectives for park management.

5. Park Name Change "Turtle River - White Otter"

It has been suggested that the name "White Otter" be added to the park name. White Otter Lake has been a park reserve since 1959 and was considered as a park candidate in its own right. During the District Land Use Guidelines (DLUG) exercise in 1983, White Otter Lake and Turtle River Candidate Parks were recommended as a combined park candidate.

The Concept suggests:

that in order to better reflect the significance of the inclusion of White Otter Lake and Castle within the park, the name "White Otter" be added to the park name. Thus, the park name would become "Turtle River - White Otter Provincial Waterway Park".

6. Summary

The preceding Concept Plan outlines the possibilities for management of the Turtle River Waterway Park. It constitutes part of the second stage of the park planning exercise for Turtle River (The first stage related to the Background Information). The next step is the preparation Preliminary Park Plan, followed by the release of the Park Management Plan for Turtle River Waterway Park.

After careful review of this document, please complete the enclosed Response Questionnaire. Your input is encouraged as it will be used in formulating the policies contained in the Preliminary Park Plan. Please take the time to respond and make known your comments and concerns so that we may arrive at the best possible plan for Turtle River Waterway Park.

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